

“THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK” NO. 3031

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*“A man shall be...as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”
Isaiah 32:2*

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, on previous portions of this verse, are as follows—#2856, Our Hiding Place and #1243, Rivers of Water in a Dry Place]

EVEN in our usually temperate climate, we sometimes complain of the great heat, which is coolness itself compared with the terrible burning of Oriental lands. A journey through the Sahara desert might make us long for even the heat of our hottest summer, unbearable though it seems to us to be. With the hot sand beneath his feet from day to day, with not a tree and scarcely so much as a bush within sight, with the sun pouring down torrents of heat as though he were full of wrath against the wayfarer, with water exceedingly scarce, and what is to be obtained about as nauseous as one can conceive, the traveler through the wilderness finds it to be a “weary land” indeed, and longs for the time when he shall once again see the cultivated fields, and the lands that flow with brooks and rivers.

Travelers tell us that—when the heat has become so intense that every living creature seems to be exhausted—when birds, if there are any, droop their wings, and beasts lie down and pant out their very life—at such times they have been glad to see great rocks right in the center of the barren plain. And creeping under their shadow, they have left it on record that they have found most refreshing coolness, and have lifted up their hands in gratitude to God for the blessing of “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Though I have never experienced to the same degree what these travelers report, I remember one hot day in Northern Italy, when—riding over a dry plain where the only living creatures seemed to be the lizards and the abundant flies which they were pursuing, and the myriads of mosquitoes that stung one almost to madness—a great rock was really a source of solid comfort. And though we could afford time to rest only for a little while beneath its shadow, we gratefully remembered it all day long and wished that we could have stopped until nightfall beneath the shadow of that “great rock in a weary land.”

Writing under divine inspiration, the prophet Isaiah describes the Lord Jesus Christ, in His manhood, as being comparable to this great rock. In this wilderness life of ours, this wretched life apart from Him, to us pilgrims through this desert to the better land beyond, Christ is a great rock, and He casts a blessed shadow athwart our path, in which we refresh ourselves and renew our strength to go on our way rejoicing.

I shall try to bring out the meaning of the text by noticing, first, *why our Lord may thus be compared to the shadow of a great rock*. Secondly, I shall show *when He is especially refreshing to us*, and thirdly, and practically, I shall ask, *what is our business with regard to Him?*

I. First, then, WHY MAY OUR LORD BE SAID TO BE A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND CASTING A REFRESHING SHADOW?

We may remember concerning Him, in the first place, that, *like a rock, He is always in the same place*. There are some shadows which you can create artificially and carry with you. There have been shadows which have been cast by great trees, but those trees have been removed. And if the traveler, in passing over the same route, should expect to enjoy their cooling shade, he would be disappointed.

But the great rock remains just where it was when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sheltered beneath it—and the traveler today may do the same. It is just so with our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name, He has not shifted His position. If any poor soul here wants to find Him, He is just where He used to be—that is, He is waiting at the mercy seat to receive every soul that will come and trust Him.

Jesus Christ is not far away from any of you—He is so near that a prayer will reach Him, a sigh will find Him, and a tear will get at His heart. Only turn your desires towards Him. Only say to Him now, in the silence of your spirit, "Jesus, Master, cast Your shadow over my sin-burdened head. Protect my soul from the wrath of God and from the fierce heat of hell!" Only ask this and it shall be given you, for Jesus is still waiting to be gracious and ready to bless you even now.

He is like a rock, too, *because His shadow is always there as well as Himself*. Wherever the sun and a rock are, there is sure to be a shadow. So, whenever God pours out the fierce beams of His wrath upon a sinner, let that sinner fly to Christ and he shall find a shelter from that wrath. Whenever conscience oppresses you and reminds you of your guilt, depend upon it that Christ has not lost His power to quiet conscience and to calm your fears.

Sometimes, a sinner fears that it is too late for him to find peace in Christ, or possibly, he thinks it is too soon, or that he has sinned away his day of grace. Ah, poor soul, all these suggestions are Satan's lies! If you really desire to have Christ's love shed abroad in your heart, that is a proof that Christ has already fixed His love upon you. If your head is now beaten upon by the fierce sunlight of God's wrath, you may come and find a shelter in the great rock of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

If you will trust in Jesus, you shall have the peace which only He can give—the peace which passes understanding. We rightly sing,

*"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd church of God
Be saved to sin no more;"*—

and they are not all saved yet—there are still some to be ingathered and therefore, Christ's blood has not yet lost its power to cleanse from sin, and Christ, as a rock, casts His welcome shade over all who come to Him to be thus refreshed.

Our Lord may also be compared to the shadow of a great rock *because the shadow of a great rock is broad*. I remember the time when, after a long, hot, and dusty walk, I found myself at the top of a considerable elevation where there is neither shrub nor tree—but a huge cross which someone has erected there.

And I remember well how my friend and I tried to get under the shelter of that cross, but there was only room enough in the shadow for one of us. We both tried to get under the shadow, for it was terribly hot in the sunshine, but the cross could not give shelter to the two of us, so we had to take turns as long as we waited on the hillside.

But it is not so in the case of a great rock. The shadow there is sometimes so wide that, if a whole caravan shall wish to rest there free from the sun's heat, they may all come and shelter under it—travelers, camels, and all.

So is it with my Master. He is no little Savior. He has already saved millions, but He is just as able to save unnumbered millions more. If the shadow of His cross could only screen one sinner, what a scramble many of you would make in order to be that one. Yet I fear that the very freeness of the divine mercy makes many despise it, though it should not do so.

If the whole of us felt the heat of the sun of God's wrath in our conscience and we were all to come crowding to Jesus, we would not hear Him say, "I cannot receive you all. I have not room for you all." If there were room in Christ for all but one, I should hear a cry from somewhere in this place, "O God, shut me not out, but receive me, even me!"

Yet many of you are content not to get under the shadow of Christ, though there is room there for you. There is room in Christ for the biggest sinner out of hell, there is room for ten thousand times ten thousand sinners, there will be room for all of Adam's race who are ever led to come and put their trust in Him. It is the shadow of a great rock and therefore it is a broad shadow.

Further, *the shadow of a rock is free to all*. Nobody thinks of paying for a seat in the shadow of a rock, and nobody would wait to be asked to come under that shadow. No one would dream of needing preparation before sitting on the shady side of a great rock. Everybody who is weary seeks the shelter—every man who is wiping the hot sweat from his brow comes and stretches himself to rest beneath that genial shade even without an invitation.

In like manner, Jesus Christ is as free as the air to all who will trust in Him. You do not need to make any preparation for coming to Him, and although many invitations are given to you to come to Christ, this is because of your unwillingness to come to Him—and not because there are any hindrances on His part.

When a soul is once brought to long for Christ, that soul may at once have Christ. The great difficulty is to make sinners feel their need of a Savior—they think that they do not need Him. They stand in the blazing sunshine and imagine that they will never faint beneath that fierce heat. But when their strength begins to depart, they are willing to come under the shadow of the great rock, and there it stands, just as it always did, and they are invited to come to it, after all their neglect of it, and find a refreshing shelter there.

Does not this truth comfort some poor soul in my audience? Are there not some of you who have made the great mistake of supposing that you had to grow better, or to do some good thing in order to get to Christ? Well, then, let me assure you that as free as is the water in the drinking-fountain at the street corner, as free as is the air which enters into your lungs, so free is the ever-gracious Savior to every guilty sinner who will but come and seek a shelter beneath this “shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Once again, our Lord is like a rock *because His shadow is most refreshing*. I do not know how true they are, but there are some old country notions that certain trees give an unhealthy shade. I have been sometimes warned not to sit under such and such a tree—if I did so, I would have a headache and I know not what evil besides.

But this I do know—the shadow of Christ never hurts anyone, but uniformly blesses in a thousand ways. When a man does but come and rest in Jesus, headaches and heartaches, so far as they have to do with moral and spiritual disorders, pass away. The believing man realizes that he is forgiven and oh, what a blessed realization is that! Hear him sing,

*“Now, oh joy! My sins are pardon'd,
Now I can, and do believe.”*

And with that sense of pardoned sin comes a sense of perfect peace with God. The forgiven man feels a joy which he never knew before—not the wild joy in which he once delighted, which first intoxicated him, and then left him depressed and heart-broken, but a joy like the course of a great river, increasing as it flows, widening and deepening as months and years roll on.

It is a blessed thing to get under the shadow of Christ. I cannot tell you all the happiness I have personally felt since I first believed in Jesus, many years ago. Amidst many struggles, and wars, and fights, I can bear my testimony that there is no life like the life of one who trusts in Jesus. There is no happiness this side the grave that is comparable with the happiness of living by faith upon the crucified Redeemer.

I do but speak what I know to be true when I recommend all young people to come beneath the shadow of this great rock in the early part of their lives, that ever afterwards, even until life's latest hour, they may have the shelter which that rock will surely bring. Never did I meet a Christian who repented

of having trusted in Christ. And never have I heard of one who, in his old age, said that he had made a mistake in relying upon Christ as his Savior. Never have I sat by the bedside of the dying to receive the recantation of a saint who told me that salvation by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, was all a deception, all a delusion.

But often have these ears of mine heard expiring songs as full of melody as the songs of angels, and heard declarations of peace and joy from departing believers that have made my heart leap and my eye to flash with joy at the very hearing. So much more deep and profound must have been the joy of those who uttered such words of holy exultation and delight.

I have just one more observation to make upon this part of our subject—our Lord is like “a great rock in a weary land” because, *though it gives shade to others, that is because it bears the heat of the sun itself*. The rock is the interposing medium between the burning sunbeams and the weary traveler. Here is a delightful picture of the mediatorial work of Christ. He puts Himself between the wrath of God and us.

The awful beams that streamed from the meridian sunshine of inflexible justice concentrated all their fierce heat upon Christ, and because they fell upon Him, and were absorbed by Him, He now presents a cool and refreshing shade to all who come and trust in Him. Jesus suffered that we may not suffer. Jesus died that we may live. He was punished in order that we may be forgiven. He was crushed to death beneath the heel of divine vengeance against sin in order that we may be lifted up to heaven by the hands of infinite mercy. Here, then, is the Gospel in miniature set before you.

You can, in your mind’s eye, see the great rock and its welcome shadow, the sun shining on the rock, and the traveler protected by the rock. Oh, that all of you who know not the Lord Jesus Christ would come to Him now! As you seek a shade from the sun when his beams are too hot for you to bear, so seek a shelter from the fierce rays of the sun of God’s wrath. There is no shelter but in Christ, but there is perfect protection in Him. To come to Him needs no long pilgrimage, no elaborate ceremonial—you can sit in your pew and trust in Jesus. There is life in a single look at Him. As soon as you trust in Him,

“The great transaction’s done;”

and beneath the shadow of that rock your spirit is secure forever.

II. But we must now pass on to notice that THERE ARE CERTAIN TIMES WHEN OUR LORD, LIKE THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK, IS PECULIARLY REFRESHING.

Unto them that believe, Jesus is always precious, but there are times when He is peculiarly so. This was the case with them *when they were under conviction of sin*. What memories that expression awakens in some of us—“conviction of sin”! Why, it was to some of us a very martyrdom. I think it would have been less painful to have been burned alive at the stake than to have passed through those horrors and depressions of spirit which some of us passed through while we were seeking pardon, but seeking it in the wrong way.

When God makes the conscience a target for His sharp arrows, when the ten great guns of the law are all fired at the sinner’s soul, when shot after shot goes tearing through the man’s false peace, blowing his self-confidence to pieces, and leaving him wounded, mangled, and maimed, when the man cries out in his agony, “What shall I do to find salvation? How shall I get rid of sin? God is righteously angry with me, how shall I appease His wrath? I fear that hell will be my everlasting portion, how can I escape that awful doom?”—it is then that Christ becomes “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Sinners will never come to Jesus while they have anything of their own to rely upon—so may the Lord strip us and bring us down to absolute bankruptcy and beggary as far as everything of our own is concerned. For, then, we shall look to Jesus and find everything in Him. So, in the time of conviction of sin, when the ten-thonged whip of the law falls upon a man’s conscience, Christ is indeed precious.

So too, dear friends, *in times of trial* believers find the shadow of this great rock to be most delightful and refreshing. I suppose that most of us, if not all, have had our trials. The dear child, whom

we loved so fondly, has sickened and died. The husband or the wife, the delight of our eyes, has been borne away to the silent tomb. Possibly we were slandered by a cruel enemy, or forsaken by a false friend in whom we had implicitly trusted. It may be that our house was burned, or our business proved a failure, and that losses followed on the heels of losses like Job’s messengers with evil tidings.

Yes, but beloved believer, in all these times of trial you have found Christ to be a blessed Comforter. And I will venture to say that the sharper your affliction has been, the sweeter has Christ been to you. I wonder how some people, who have many troubles, can get on without Christ? I marvel at you, consumptive young woman, and you, hard-working man, with a growing family, trying to do without the consolations of our blessed Savior.

I know that some people have the notion that religion is not meant for the poorest of the poor, but if there are any people whom it suits best, surely it is these. If it does not fill the cupboard, it makes the heart content with what it has. If it does not put broadcloth on the back, it makes the wearer satisfied with fustian. There is no one like Christ for the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the sorrowing. He is indeed as “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” to all such poor tried souls.

Let me also remind you that *we shall know more about the refreshing shade of Christ when we come to die*. Not many weeks hence, some of us must die. When there is such a large number of people gathered together, some of them must soon die. But all of us must, ere long, gather up our feet in the bed and die,

“Our fathers’ God to meet.”

What must it be to die without a Savior? A shiver runs through my frame as I think of it. To die without a hope, how sad! But to die trusting in Christ, how blessed! I remember standing in the pulpit, one sultry summer’s afternoon, preaching of the joys of heaven and there was one woman’s eye, that specially caught mine as I was preaching. I knew not why it was, but it seemed to fascinate me.

And as I spoke of heaven, she seemed to drink in every word, and her eyes flashed back again the thoughts I uttered. She seemed to lead me on to speak more and more of the streets of gold and the gates of pearl till, suddenly, her eyes appeared to me to be too fixed—and at last it struck me that, while I had been talking of heaven, *she had gone there*.

I paused and asked if someone in the pew would kindly see whether the friend sitting there was not dead, and in a moment, her husband said, “She is dead, sir.” I had known her long as a consistent Christian woman, and as I stood there, I half wished that I could have changed places with her. There was not a sigh, nor a tear. She seemed to drink in the thoughts of heaven, and then straightway to go and enjoy it.

If such a sudden departure is not ours, it will be much like it—we shall close our eyes on earth and open them in heaven beneath the shadow of that great rock. In heaven, they sit beneath Christ’s shadow, and on earth we will do the same. So we will still sing,

***“Where is the shadow of that rock
That from the sun defends Thy flock?
Fain would I feed amongst Thy sheep,
Among them rest, among them sleep.”***

But my dear hearers, *what will it be to have the shelter of Christ in the day of judgment?* We can never form right ideas of what that day of judgment will be,

***“That day of wrath, that dreadful day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,”—***

and weeping and wailing shall be the prelude to the sitting of the Judge upon the great white throne. Then, when every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him, it will be a blessed thing to have Him as the Rock of ages to hide us from the wrath of that tremendous day.

*“Day of judgment, day of wonders!
 Hark, the trumpet’s awful sound,
 Louder than a thousand thunders,
 Shakes the vast creation round!
 How the summons
 Will the sinner’s heart confound!*

*See the Judge our nature wearing,
 Clothed in majesty divine!
 Ye who long for His appearing,
 Then shall say, ‘This God is mine!’
 Gracious Savior!
 Own me in that day for Thine!”*

III. Now lastly, if these things be so, and they are so, WHAT IS OUR BUSINESS?

Our business is *to get under this shadow if we are not already under it*. What is the use of a shadow to those who stand in the blazing sunshine? There is many a soul that stands in the sunshine longer than it need, and so feels faint and weary, and there are some who have thus got such a sunstroke as they will never lose this side of heaven. I mean that they have to go doubting and fearing all their spiritual life because they were so long before they trusted in Christ.

I know that only the Holy Spirit can bring a sinner under this blessed shadow, but how base must be the human heart when it will not come and take what Christ so freely provides! Why will you die? Why will you perish when you need not? There is a shadow—why will you stand in the fierce light of the sun?

All the bells of heaven are ringing out, “Come and welcome!” All the angels of God are singing, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome!” From this open Book, from the Gospel preached by one of God’s ministers tonight, there sounds this message, “Come and trust in the Incarnate Son of God.” I wish I knew how to put it in more melting tones, but it needs the Holy Spirit to bring it home to your hearts.

Dear trembler, waverer, halting between two opinions, you who have so long put off coming to Christ, do come now. I ask again, why do you continue to stand beneath the wrath of God when you need not linger there a moment longer?

*“Come to Jesus,
 Come to Jesus, sinner, come!”*

And when you have come, *take care to tell others what you have discovered*. Do not let any poor soul be without the knowledge of the way of salvation so far as you can tell it. Tell to those who are round about you, your experience of the comforts of true religion. This is the way to gather jewels for the Redeemer’s crown.

If you find that Christ deceives you, let us know, for, as honest men, we would not like to go on telling an idle tale. But if you find Him true, if He comforts you, and blesses you, do bear your testimony to others, for, then, perhaps your child, your wife, your brother, your neighbor, may come and trust Him too.

I will be bound for Him that He will reject none of you who come to Him and I will be a bondsman for Him for another thing, that, if you once have Him as your Savior, you will never grow weary of Him.

You will say that it was the best day that ever dawned upon you when you gave your heart to the crucified Christ, who, on Calvary’s cross, made the one sacrifice for sin forever.

Oh, yield your heart to Him! I see Him standing there with that pierced hand of His, He knocks softly at your heart’s door.

*“Admit Him, for the human breast
Never entertain’d so kind a guest.”*

*Admit Him, ere His anger burn,
His feet depart, and ne’er return:*

*Admit Him, or the hour’s at hand
When at His door denied you’ll stand.”*

By the love of God in Christ Jesus, hold out no longer. Young man, I beseech you, by the precious blood of Christ, give yourself to Him. Have you done it? Do you trust Him wholly? Then, rejoice and sing, you seraphs, and let heaven be glad, for Christ sees the reward of His soul-travail, for a child is born in His house tonight that shall live to praise Him, both here and throughout eternity.

May the Lord bless every one here and His shall be the glory forever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 5:17-48

Verse 17. *Think not that I am came to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

The life, work, and words of Christ are not an emendation of the Old Testament or an abrogation of it. It stands fast and firm, fulfilled, carried to perfection, filled to the full in Christ.

18-19. *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

It is vain to teach the commandments without first doing them. The doing must always precede the teaching. If a man’s example cannot be safely followed, it will be unsafe to trust his words.

20. *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

The scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be righteous beyond all others. “Nay,” says Christ, “you must go beyond them.” They were, after all, superficial, flimsy, pretentious, unreal in their righteousness—and we must have a far nobler character than they ever attained, or we “shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

21. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

This is a proof that Christ did not come to abolish the law or to abate its demands in any degree whatsoever.

22. But I say unto you,

Oh, what divine dignity there is in this majestic person whose *ipse dixit* is to shift all the sayings of the ages! He claims authority to speak, even though He should contradict all the Rabbis and all the learned men that went before Him—“I say unto you,”

22. *That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Christ here shows us that the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," deals with anger, with angry words, with words of cursing, with words of derision—for all these are killing things, hurting and wounding things—and the passion of anger is forbidden under the command, "Thou shalt not kill."

Men have not thought so, but it really is so, for he who is angry with his brother is a murderer. There is the spirit, the essence of that which leads to murder in the passion which breeds malice and revenge. The law of God is spiritual—it touches the emotions, the thoughts, the desires as well as the words and actions of men. If I desire ill for a man, I have within me that which would desire his death—and what is that, after all, but murder in the heart? How strict is this law, and yet how just and right!

23-24. *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

It is said that in India there is a complete divorce of religion from morality, so that a man may be supposed to be eminently religious even while living in the utmost filthiness and vice. But it must never be so among us. We must never imagine that God can accept an offering from us while we harbor any enmity in our hearts.

Perhaps, after reading this passage, you say, "If I had anything against my brother, I would go to him at once, and seek to be reconciled to him." That would be quite right, but you must go further than that, for Christ says, "If thou bring your gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee."

It is much more easy to go to the man who has wronged you than to the one whom you have wronged. Yet the second is evidently the clearer duty, and should be attended to at once—neither can we expect the Lord to attend to us unless we attend to this duty.

25-26. *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

There is nothing like ending disputes at once, before the rancor grows, and your adversary becomes determined to push you to extremes. Oh, for more of that spirit of yielding! You know how people say, "If you tread on a worm: it will turn," but brethren, a worm is not an example for a Christian, even if the poor wounded creature does turn toward you in its agony. If you turn, turn to kiss the hand that smites you, and to do good to them that evil entreat you.

27-28. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

So that the unholy desire, the lascivious glance, everything that approximates towards licentiousness, is here condemned—and Christ is proved to be not the Abrogator of the law, but the Confirmer of it. See how He shows that the commandment is exceedingly broad, wide as the canopy of heaven, all-embracing. How sternly it condemns us all and how well it becomes us to fall down at the feet of the God of infinite mercy, and seek His forgiveness.

*"Tis mercy—mercy we implore,
We would Thy pity move;
Thy grace is an exhaustless store,
And Thou, Thyself art Love."*

29-30. *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

Give up the dearest, choicest, and apparently most needful thing, if it leads you into sin. The same rule that bids you avoid sin, bids you also avoid all that leads to sin. If adultery is forbidden, so also is that glance with which the sin usually begins. We are to turn away our eyes from beholding that which leads towards sin and we are not to touch or taste that which would readily lead us into iniquity.

Oh, that we had sufficient decision of character to make short work of everything which tends towards evil! Many persons, when their right eye offends them, put a green shade over it. And when their right hand offends them, they tie it up in a sling. But that is not obeying the command of Christ. He charges you to get rid of everything that would lead you wrong—make a clean sweep of it. You are wrong enough at your best, so do not permit anything to appertain to you which would lead you still further astray.

31-32. *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication,*

Which is a sufficient and justifiable reason for divorce,

32. *Causest her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced—*

That is to say, who is divorced without sufficient cause,

32. *Committeth adultery.*

Among the Jews, divorce was the easiest thing in the world. A man might, in a pet, utter words which would divorce his wife. The Savior abolished that evil once for all and made divorce a crime, as it always is “saving for the cause of fornication.”

33-34. *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all;*

Christ thus abolishes the whole system of swearing, as it ought to be abolished in every place. And He goes on to show that He did not mean merely unclean, false oaths, or oaths taken as some men take them blasphemously, but every form and kind of oath, for He says, “Swear not at all:”

34-37. *Neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool : neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

If words mean anything, this command of Christ is an utter abolishment of oaths taken before magistrates as well as everywhere else. I can make nothing else out of it—indeed, it must mean that, because Christ contrasts His teaching with that of former ages—“It hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all.”

A man, who cannot be believed upon his word, certainly cannot be believed upon his oath, and usually, when a man tells a lie, the next thing he does is swear to it. When Peter denied his Master, the next thing he did was to curse and to swear, because he thought it likely that they would not imagine that he was a follower of Christ if he did curse and swear. So he gave that as a pretty clear proof that he had not been with Christ and was not one of His disciples. Alas, that we should need anything beside “Yea, yea,” and “Nay, nay!”

38-43. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*

39 *But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

There are many who do the second of those two things, but not the first.

44-45. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of*

your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

God constantly does that which many people regard almost as a crime, namely, doing good to the undeserving. It is the very genius of Christianity to help those who are utterly unworthy—to be kind and generous even to those who are pretty certain to repay us with ingratitude and malice.

46-48. *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Stretch towards the highest conceivable standard and be not satisfied till you reach it.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 808

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